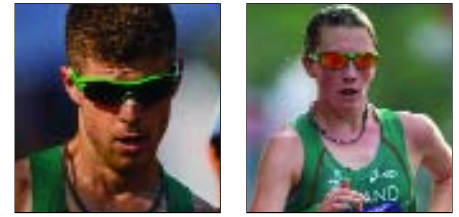


The Last Word

Person of the Year Joint Award Winners Colin Griffin and Laura Reynolds



COLIN

I was delighted and greatly honoured to be awarded joint *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year Award* for 2013 along with Laura Reynolds. As a proud Leitrim person who has travelled the world competing internationally in my sport, I have always valued the support I have received from Leitrim people at home and overseas.

2012 was a very special year for the county with two athletes out of a population of 25,000 competing at the London Olympic Games. Having qualified for the Games myself after a challenging and eventful campaign, I was also proud to play a role in Laura's qualification as I have been her coach for the past 11 years. The support I received in the lead-up from at home, as well as the Leitrim community in London, made for a very unique and special occasion on August 11th when we were both competing on the same day, on a 2km circuit along The Mall, where the race walking events took place at the Olympics.

London was as good as a 'home' Olympics for us, and it made for an electric atmosphere along the course. It was unfortunately a disappointing outcome for myself as, despite being on course for one of the best performances of my career, I was disqualified at 38km having received a third red card. To be disqualified while fighting hard and giving my best was some small consolation, but nonethe-

less it is a huge disappointment not to have a finishing result on my CV at these Olympic Games. Later that afternoon Laura competed in the women's 20km, finishing in 20th position in a personal best time, above expectations.

2013 has been something of a transition year for myself both personally and professionally. I took a step back from international competition foregoing the opportunity to compete at the World Championships in Moscow (where Rob Heffernan won the gold medal!), as I wanted to focus on other career goals and opportunities. I am involved in a new business venture and also registered to complete a degree course in Strength & Conditioning, both of which are very demanding. I have still been training and competing, while also coaching Laura, where she has shown potential to be a future medallist in major championships over the next few years. I spent three months in Australia travelling and learning, and was met by plenty of Leitrim people living there. It certainly made me aware of the strong community bond that Leitrim people display and value perhaps more so than other counties.

I was delighted to take up invitations to visit a number of schools in the county during this past year. I am passionate about the value of sport in communities, education and health. To be able to share my experiences and promote sport in

schools is something I am always happy to do. Sport has given me opportunities throughout my career and the skills, knowledge and experiences can have a positive effect in other areas of career and life. I am always happy to promote the value of sport in the county and, in a way, put something back into the sport and the local community, that has supported me down the years!

LAURA

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the *Leitrim Guardian* committee for selecting myself alongside Colin Griffin for the *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year award* 2013. It was a great honour for myself, and my family, to be chosen for this very prestigious award.

2012 had been a very successful year for me. I qualified for my first Olympic Games where I came in 20th place in a new personal best time. Following on from 2012, 2013 was the first year in the new Olympic cycle. I qualified for the World Track and Field Championships in Moscow and the World University Games in Kazan where I finished in 6th place. I would like to congratulate this year's winner of the *Leitrim Guardian Person of the Year Award*, Eleanor Shanley. I wish her all the best. I would also like to recognise all the hard work from the committee that goes into producing the *Leitrim Guardian*, which showcases our Lovely Leitrim!